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# The Playground

To Promote Play and  
Public Recreation



*North Park, Fall River, Mass.*

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# The Playground

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## ARE THE PARKS FOR THE PEOPLE OR THE PEOPLE FOR THE PARKS?\*

EDWARD B. DEGROOT

Playground Association, Chicago, Illinois

All people of all times who have left an impression upon the world have been builders of parks, and where parks have been built for the people, designed and administered for them, there has been a high degree of democracy. The Egyptians built beautiful but small parks, exquisitely decorated. In contrast, the Assyrians and Persians took possession of the woodlands, the hills and valleys, and had park preserves as is not possible in little ornamental parks. We are told that Rome had at least forty parks. In the Middle Ages nothing was contributed to the development of parks, but in the Renaissance we find a new development which is now the rich heritage of the European countries. In the fifteenth century the European cities were mainly military camps but outside the fortresses and walls there were reservations of ground used as parade grounds and for military drills. As civilization advanced and the walls were taken down certain sections of these military reservations were set aside, and these are now the glory of many cities in Europe. In the late fifties and in the sixties in this country, park development began to take place in the large American cities,—in Central Park, in New York, for instance. Cities in the middle west were without this development, and are now struggling to acquire parks, at great expense, realizing that if they are to leave an impression upon their time they must have parks and make them democratic.

**Making Waste  
Lands Beautiful** American park development, in design and administration, generally speaking, is in favor of parks for the people, but there are certain noticeable instances in design and administration which make us raise this question. Parks are for the people when waste land in a certain territory is secured and converted into a pleasure ground, as, for instance, when the sand dunes outside of San Francisco were converted into wonderful Golden Gate Park. Washington Park in Chicago was useless land. Much

\* Address given at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, Richmond, Virginia, May 6, 1913

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of Central Park in New York was marsh land good for nothing before it was turned to park purposes. Always, when men combine to acquire waste lands and make them beautiful they are developing parks for the people.

**Preserving Natural Beauty** The preservation of brooks, hills, forests, and valleys constitutes another tendency in the development of parks. In many communities in this country these are being taken possession of by industry, but where men step in and take these beautiful stretches and convert them into parks we have, again, parks for the people.

### **Small Parks in Congested Areas**

The other side of the question is that parks are frequently developed far from the homes and from the people; large tracts at distant points become not the people's parks, but the parks of a very small proportion of the people who can reach them in their automobiles, or by trolley. And so the development of the small park in the midst of congested districts in great cities represents right ideals in the design and administration of parks. In this sort of development we find the glory of the Chicago system. Small parks not lacking in beauty but carried to the very doorsteps of the people in the stock yard district and to those in the steel works.

### **A Double Tax**

Parks are not for the people when the scheme of administration gives concessions to outsiders who rent boats and sell drinks, because a double tax is thereby levied upon the people. They must pay for the maintenance of the parks and their operation, and then this middle man must have his overhead expenses in order to make his profit. Therefore the people are taxed doubly. Park boards ought to conduct their own refectories and rent all boats. Their function is not to make money, but to expend it wisely. Park administration is a matter of human service, not a matter of business.

### **Make Parks Available at Night**

Our parks are not for the people when there is a lack of use of them by night, and this is common in a great many cities, or if they are used, they are wrongly used. The Vice Commission's report in Chicago shows a perfectly appalling record of immorality in the large park areas. We should light them better and make

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them useful for the multitude by lighting them for games and dancing and plays and picnic parties. In the development of the use of parks by night I offer this suggestion: that we have disappearing lights that may go out without warning and as suddenly appear. I feel certain if we had a number of them in every park we could cope with this problem of immorality.

**Provide for Recreation—Active as well as Passive** Parks are not for the people when the design calls for a scheme of filling them with monuments on the one hand and "Keep Off the Grass" signs on the other. That is the equivalent in policy of saying (if I may be allowed to use the vernacular of the day), "Fence in the dead ones and fence out the live ones." There is nothing inconsistent in designing a park in including a great deal of beauty and a great deal of utility. In Chicago we find the solution to the problem of combining beauty and utility. Those who oppose this view say almost invariably, "Parks are for rest and recreation," and the people who present that side of the argument fail to appreciate the two sides of rest and recreation. Recreation is not always a matter of passivity; neither is rest a matter of passivity in every case. If we were to follow that argument and provide a park which had in it nothing but beauty the only people who could find rest there would be the hod carriers, and the steel workers, and other fellows who are using their muscles all day long. The banker, the accountant, the school teacher, the minister, in order to secure rest demands a place where he can use his larger muscles. He needs to engage in some way in activity in order to get real rest and recreation. The artistic argument breaks down when we say, "This park must be very beautiful. We will have nothing in it but beautiful things." So we build a band stand costing a quarter of a million dollars, and then hire a forty dollar band to play the worst kind of music. Where in that case is the artistic argument supported?

**Parks Not Alone for the Eye** The difficulty lies in this, that both in design and in administration we have had the idea that the park is to be used only through the eyes. We are to drink in everything we see there merely through the eyes. It is common observation nowadays that as a people we are becoming eye-minded. That seems to be the attitude of park designers and park administrators. Sometimes

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they give way a little and say, "You may take in some of this park service through the ears. We will give you something to hear as well as to see," and they put in a "Zoo." There we may go and listen to the roars of the animals in captivity. What we need is to add to the sense of sight and the slight sense of hearing now gratified in the parks the opportunity to exercise the sense of touch. Boys and girls want to touch things. We need so far as the young people are concerned to furnish a maximum of opportunity for the gratification of the sense of touch in our parks. You remember the boy who was riding on a trolley car and saw something by the roadside which interested him; the trolley car rushed by without his being able to satisfy his curiosity about it, and carried him a mile and a half beyond. Then he stopped the car and got off and walked back that mile and a half in order to touch that thing and learn what it was. We must not ignore this desire on the part of young people to touch things, and we can gratify that desire by having in parks, games such as tennis and volley ball, football and baseball fields, playgrounds of various types, paddling ponds, swimming pools, and other recreational facilities.

The song of the park should not be, "Drink to me only with thine eyes"; it should be "Embrace me in thy youth. Adore me forever after."

## **RECREATION FROM A CITY PLANNING STANDPOINT\***

**CHARLES MULFORD ROBINSON**

Rochester, New York

The hypothesis, in asking for a paper on this subject, is that recreation, when looked at from a city planning standpoint would be seen in an unbiased way, and yet with full regard for its relation with all the other activities of city life. Such appraisal of recreation's claims as is made by city planning will not, at least, be based on prejudice. The goal of any good city planner is community efficiency, and he may be supposed to be no more interested in promoting this by recreation than by any other means.

\* Address prepared for the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, May 8, 1913

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### **Recreation Seen as Relative to Other Needs**

Further, the city planner has to consider not only the actual value of recreation, but its relative value—he must weigh its claims against the other uses to which city property may be put. This is why we see, or may expect to see, recreation when viewed from the city planning standpoint, not only from a new angle but from an unbiased one and from one in which there is offered a civic scale of measurement.

I have said that the primary goal of city planning study is community efficiency. The efficiency aimed at is not simply commercial and industrial. It is necessarily social and physical, also. In birdseye view of the city and all its teeming, varied life, the pressing question which the city planner asks himself is, "What can be done to promote this all-around efficiency?"

In attempting to answer this question, he may see here a street which needs to be widened; there the necessity for cutting a new traffic artery; yonder a grade to be lowered, and here realize that a railroad must be built. If, among such great concerns, the city planner also says, "Here I must have a children's playground; yonder build me a park; of that waterfront, commerce shall give up something to recreation; and among those factories you must clear a space for games"—if city planning says such things, as it invariably does, we may well be interested in its point of view and seek some suggestion, at least, of the system by which it determines recreative needs and the method of their satisfaction.

### **A Prince among Effi- ciency Engineers**

It would be useless to repeat here the usual professional arguments in favor of playgrounds and recreative facilities. To a considerable extent city planning must take cognizance of these and be influenced by them; but the conviction of the planner is based on his social viewpoint and his wish for community efficiency. He is not interested in planning play spaces *for* the people—as, for instance, most persons in this audience might be—but, as somebody has well said, he wants recreation *by* the people and *of* the people. His task, as he views it, is not to hand out a luxury; but to provide, or make possible the development, of what he believes a necessity for the progression of the citizens into useful members of the community; and to adjust this provision to the topography so naturally that it may be made at

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the minimum of expense. In simpler language, the city planner wishes simply to make the very best possible of all the men, women and children who live in the city, and to do this at the least cost to them. He is a prince among efficiency engineers.

### **Three Groups to Consider**

With this conception of his problem, the planner groups the population in various ways. He groups them geographically; he groups them according to age, sex, and occupation; he groups them according to their financial ability to pay for their pleasures; but most of all he finds the classification into these three groups valuable: (1), the school group; (2), the unmarried working group—mostly young men and young women; and, (3), the home group. For these represent the three typical stages through which the bulk of our population passes; the classification is thus strictly democratic and American. Moreover, the groups overlap, so that in the individual's choice, now of one form of recreation and now of another, he may still be within a listed group.

Yet the other classifications have value as cross indices. Satisfactory provision must stand the test of any and all methods of classification; and the only way to be sure it is satisfactory is to apply the cross tests they offer. While the planner has been studying the community's needs, he has been also considering topographical opportunities; but these do not here concern us.

### **Work and Sleep Time Easy for the City Planner**

A reason that recreation looms so large in the city planner's field and receives from him such especially earnest thought is that he finds it his hardest problem. He realizes that time in the city is spent in one of three ways: in work, in sleep, and in leisure. At work and in sleep, people can be pigeon-holed. They sort themselves, get into their own niches and stay there. All the city planner has to do for them is to make easy the groove in which they slip back and forth—from sleep to work and work to sleep—and to make these two termini as comfortable and healthful as he can.

### **But When They Won't Be Pigeon-holed!**

But people may do anything during their leisure hours. They may go helter skelter anywhere. The planner, priding himself on his system, cannot put his hand on them; adoring efficiency, he

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is confronted by waste; high-browed, he has to deal with irresponsible joyousness. And the worst of it is, he knows that the leisure hours and the joyous mood are necessary for the good of the community, that he must try to increase them, and that in all the life of the city one of the most pitiful and most dangerous things is misuse of leisure and the seeking for pleasures that do not satisfy or are unwholesome.

After all, there is need for his methodical spirit, to bring order out of leisure's chaotic conditions; play does require his serious, earnest study. His hardest problem is second to none in its urgency. He must systematize the recreational facilities of the city; he must lift them out of exclusively commercial exploitation and give to them civic dignity; he must overcome the tendency to belittle or neglect them and see that they have the attention they deserve in the rounded life of the city. He must so arrange urban play facilities that waste will be eliminated, that mistakes will not be made, to the end that even in their free leisure people will slip into their proper niches—not because they have to, but because they want to. Only so can the efficiency of leisure be increased.

### **His Most Fascinating Problem**

This is the city planner's point of view. Have I made it clear that community recreation, looked at from his angle, where it appears as an expression of one of the three time-periods of human life in the city, is not quite what it is when seen from points that are less detached? Yet in the long perspective, which he must take, recreation loses nothing of its value and importance. That is significant. Again, if the problem it offers to the city planner is his hardest, it is also, let us hasten to say, his most fascinating, because most human, most varied, most free from pain.

### **Economy in Outlay and Usefulness**

A word as to his point of view, with regard to the relations and connections of the subject, when the planner comes to work out details. Beginning with the school group, the location of playgrounds in school-yards is likely to appeal to him because of its double economy, in outlay and in usefulness. Again, the economy, safety, privacy and proximity to home, which commend playspace in the center of the block for small children of congested sections, will be supplemented in his mind by special

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arguments of such appeal that we may hear more of this kind of playground in the future than we have heard in the past. These arguments include the elasticity which such playground location makes possible in the depth of house lots, or even of block size, should the character of the neighborhood change; and also the adaptability of the place itself to varied use. Thus even with the children's playground, the city planner, after he has convinced himself of its need, is influenced, when he comes to details of location, by considerations that are typically his own.

### **His Special Point of View a Gain to Recreation**

This special point of view continues through the whole list of recreative provisions. The fact does not mean a loss to recreation, but probably a gain, for until all the proper activities of the town are articulated as nicely as is a great machine, there must be friction, waste of power, and frequent breakdowns in the mechanism of urban life. If, on the other hand, recreative facilities can be provided by the city planner in a way which, without detriment to their own value, is of use in promoting the other functions of the city, we may obviously expect to gain them sooner and with more completeness.

Coming to the unmarried group of workers, the city planner is confronted by the fact that with the gradual shortening of labor's hours leisure is increasing. He realizes that his difficult problem tends therefore to grow in importance. He sees that without his assistance, leisure in the city will be largely spent indoors; that the cheap theatre, the saloon, the poolroom, or the transportation vehicle will absorb much of the time wrested, by long effort, from hours of work. Consciousness that the saloon and poolroom have too commonly degenerated from a "comfortable club" to a drinking den, may interest him only as it affects health and community efficiency. But from those points of view the call for help of the poorest paid labor rings in his ears. The call is two-fold: it is to lessen the time which must be spent—which is to say wasted—in transportation, and to provide facilities for healthful and inexpensive pleasures out of doors, but near those who need them.

### **Recreation Tied up with Many Things**

The first part of this task, which may be translated as the shortening of distance between the worker's natural foci, sub-

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divides itself in turn into two general lines of effort. The one has to do with street plans, traffic circulation and transportation systems; the other with the removal of factories to the city's outskirts and the adjacent development of healthful home colonies. Both lines of effort are tied up with so many of the conventional city planning problems that we sometimes forget that they have connection with the question of recreation. The point I would make here, therefore, is that the city planner may be doing most effective service for recreation, and doing it consciously, when he seems to be thinking and working for matters entirely foreign to it. He is, that is to say, kinder and more humane than he looks.

Having eliminated, as far as he can, the necessity for loss of considerable time in the act of coming and going, he finds his group of working men and girls, who have not yet established homes of their own in which to find their simplest and purest recreation, possessed of an added leisure for him to take care of. His recreation problem is no more nearly solved than it was before.

**Recreation in Truth** It is at this juncture that he lays hold of property close to the factories, or on the water-front, and says that there must be reservation for play—opportunities to exercise other muscles than those in use for long hours at the bench; opportunities to see, in flower, sun-flecked lawn or distant view, pictures that are in restful contrast to the figures in the ledger; opportunities to let the deep silence of woodlands, the song of birds, the ripple of water, calm nerves which the ceaseless click or roar of machinery has strained. Among the problems of the city planner, recreation holds its place, let us observe, not as play or as entertainment, but because it is in truth *re-creation*. If he as an enthusiast, it is because he is the most literal-minded of you all.

### **Precious Hours in the Home Not the Concern of the City Planner**

Coming, finally, to the third, or home, group, his interest in this lies in the recognition that the true unit of society is the family—not the working man alone, or the working woman. The highest value to the community of the extra leisure time which the city planner has tried to save, and perhaps succeeded in saving for the worker, is not primarily the additional exercise or rest which is thus made possible. It is the

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increase of time—waking time—which he has enabled the worker to spend with his family. So far as the city planner's interest in recreation goes, this is as valuable and as interesting as if the worker spent it in playing ball, catching grasshoppers, or swimming. What the worker does with those precious hours, spent on the further side of his own threshold in the bosom of his family, is mercifully one of the few things in city life that need not trouble the city planner.

He has to realize, however, that all the time will not be spent in the home, or in the garden—when there is one. So arises the need for recreative facilities—as park and picnic ground—which the family can enjoy.

**Civic Art More Intimate and Tender** A growing respect for the family as the social unit, and for social service instead

of mere design as the true test of city planning, must lead, I think, to some abandonment of "the grand style" in our civic art in favor of the intimate and tender. What is "monumental" is deadly, or nearly so, as far as recreation is concerned. When we dare to be more light and gay and cheerful in civic design—whether the subject be open space or sculpture—the cause of recreation will have gained. As city planning is tending more and more now to break away from the architect's draughting table, I think the cause is pretty safe.

**Here a Little and  
There a Little—for the  
Good of All**

But to say this is to digress. In brief review we have seen our imaginary city planner measure the recreative needs of the community according to his threefold classification as adopted at the start. He has acted independently and with loyalty to his profession; and yet has proved a champion of recreation's cause. He will now apply some of his other classifications as cross tests. He will take the geographical, for instance, and note whether every section of the city has been provided for. The family, for example, is so little stronger than its weakest link, the child, that the home group must not be made to go too far to find a park. Or, again, the unmarried workers of the town may not all be concentrated in the one predominantly industrial section. Consequently, he may find it necessary to provide more than one athletic field; or to supplement the ball ground of one section by let us say, river boating in another. It is the city planner's task—nay, his profession's

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privilege and glory—to seek out all the needs and try to satisfy them.

I do not know that I can better summarize the planner's point of view, with reference to recreation, than by these words, taken from a new book by Percy Mackaye: "For the very reason that our people are perhaps the busiest in the world, it becomes a national concern that their leisure be filled with joyous regenerative influences."

## MOTION PICTURE LEGISLATION\*

RALPH FOLKS

Board of Aldermen, New York City

Motion picture legislation is in its infancy. This is accounted for, not because there is no need for it, but because the motion picture is comparatively a new development. This form of amusement has been growing and growing until it has now become one of the greatest sources of entertainment for the wage-earning and middle classes in America, if not in the entire civilized world. In the large cities the attendance at motion picture shows is undoubtedly many times as great as at the theatres, running into the millions yearly in attendance and income. In the smaller cities and villages, exhibitions are frequently given before well-filled houses. A tremendous business and field of activity has grown up in most instances under laws that were never intended to apply to motion picture theatres—laws inadequate and improper, meeting neither the needs of the public nor of the business.

**Originally an  
Inclination towards  
Suppression**

What has been the attitude of the public toward motion pictures? In the first instance it was one of toleration with an inclination toward suppression. Influential and high-minded citizens have believed that motion pictures are bad, that the show places are immoral and that the legislative policy should be one of suppression. The press has been an influential factor in this situation. Public opinion has now changed, however. The doctrine of extermination has ceased and the best element of the community, including clergymen, lawyers, educators, social workers

\* Address given at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, Richmond, Virginia, May 9, 1913

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and public officials have come to realize that the motion picture may and does serve a great public need in the field of education and amusement; that it is unparalleled in its possibilities for the masses of the people and that it has become a worthy substitute for many lower and frequently harmful amusements. For these reasons, motion pictures are now regarded as an institution to be encouraged, regulated and developed along proper lines. Public opinion is now ripe for proper legislation providing for a legitimate growth of the business, together with proper protection for the public.

### **A Question of Morals and of Safety**

There are two fields of legislative effort: one respecting the censorship of films and the other the physical requirements of buildings in which exhibitions are to be given. One is a question of morals and the other a question of safety and sanitation.

Censorship may be had in one of two ways, either through an official body, or by public officials through legislation. If unofficial censorship is sufficient no legislation is needed. The National Board of Censorship has been acting in an unofficial capacity for a period of five years. Through its representatives and correspondents and its co-operation with the manufacturers and public officials it has become quite effective in improving and raising the standards of films and suppressing undesirable exhibitions.

**Censorship in America?** Shall the government prescribe and supervise the details of morality for the individual, or shall it establish broad penal laws and rely upon such laws together with public opinion and public officials for its safeguards? Centuries ago the question was substantially settled in favor of the latter position. Censorship of religion and moral conduct was abolished as unnecessary and inconsistent with personal liberty. Our constitutions of government have eliminated such restrictions and protected us against them. Official censorship, through legislation, is nothing other than a form of inspection. Inspection of motion pictures by public officials will be subject to the same advantages and disadvantages as building, sanitary, highway, or any other kind of official inspection. It offers great temptation to the dishonest and some opportunity for public service through capable and upright officials. The community has found itself nearly equally divided with respect to this issue. Many cities have established a film censorship and many have not. Prejudice against

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motion pictures together with the opportunity to make individual political capital, incidental to so-called high-minded principles, are in some instances responsible for censorship activity.

In rare instances it is possible that films may be exhibited contrary to the penal law and that many films may offend the taste of one individual while acceptable to the rest of the community. A variety of moral and dramatic standards is responsible for the difference in views as to censorship.

**Who Shall Censor?** The question thus arises, "What individuals shall do the censoring?" To what extent will they agree or disagree with the rest of the community? How far might such a body force upon others, standards unsuited and distasteful to them? In case improper pictures were certified and passed would it not be impossible to get a conviction under the penal law, as is possible under present conditions?

Inasmuch as official censorship is contrary to American institutions and necessarily involves the expenditure of public funds and inasmuch as it may either become a fertile field of graft for dishonest officials or arbitrary or tyrannical, it would seem that it should be adopted only in the event of extreme necessity. The penal laws of nearly every State and city in the United States with respect to the exhibition of immoral, degrading and improper pictures are extremely severe. It would seem that the manufacturer and the exhibitor run the risk of imprisonment for any offense against public decency and that in many instances for any offense the licenses necessary to carry on business could be immediately revoked with great financial loss to the proprietor. For these reasons it would seem but reasonable and proper that every effort should be made in any community to suppress improper pictures through the means already provided before recourse is had to legislation. Convictions under the penal laws would strengthen the censorship contention. If frequent convictions may be had a proper case for censorship is established.

**Two Distinct Objects** The public should understand that legislation respecting censorship which is debatable is a separate and distinct proposition from legislation affecting physical conditions. It is undoubtedly because of an arbitrary demand that these two features be combined that proper legislation for structural requirements has not been secured in the city of New York.

It is impossible at this time to discuss the many technical details

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of structural requirements. Some of the broader phases of legislative policy may, however, be properly considered. It is fundamental that any legislation should be based on the actual requirements of the situation and in any event, proper light, ventilation, sanitation and fire protection must be provided. Such provisions may be reasonable and sufficient in which case the exhibitor may make a reasonable profit or they may be unreasonable in which event the law becomes substantially prohibitive with the result that small and improper assembly rooms are frequently utilized for the sake of economy.

### New York Typical of Large Cities

The motion picture situation in the city of New York in many respects is typical of the conditions prevailing in other large cities.

A brief review of this situation indicates great legislative possibilities. There are to-day in the city of New York some 800 motion picture houses which have been built without standardized requirements. Strange as it may seem there is no law where detailed requirements may be found. Departmental rules and regulations, subject to change without notice, govern the erection of motion picture houses. The jurisdiction of various city departments conflicts at many points. The ventilation is usually bad and in some instances indescribably bad. The fire protection is frequently inadequate. In addition many of the places are unsanitary, unclean and in a neglected state of repair.

### Under the Theatre Law

In New York City a moving picture theatre may be built under the general theatre law known as Section 109 of the Building Code and if the seating capacity exceeds 300 it must be so built. While the provisions of this law are satisfactory for theatres they are necessarily very drastic and building under it is very expensive, in fact so expensive that 800 proprietors have elected to operate places of amusement, known as assembly rooms, having less than 300 seats. The admission fee of five cents and ten cents does not warrant as a business enterprise the erection and operation of such expensive motion picture theatres and the payment of the annual license fee of \$500. As a result 800 small shows have been put in operation under unfavorable conditions and are licensed as common shows, not as theatres, at a license fee of \$25 per year. Vacant stores and halls, old churches and quarters which have become unprofitable for any other purpose have been converted into motion picture theatres

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without regard to modern standards of ventilation, fire protection and sanitation. In many instances a stage has been provided where cheap and offensive vaudeville is given.

### **Laws for the Old Places and for the New**

A two-fold problem has thus arisen in New York City and many other cities. What legislation is necessary for the old places and what laws and standardized requirements shall govern the erection of new places? In any city a careful study should always be made of proper standards, legal requirements and court decisions before any law is passed. A rigid inspection is the first necessity in dealing with the old places already licensed. A diagram of the premises should be made showing details as to windows, exits, ventilation and sanitation, materials used, fire escapes. Other material facts should be set forth in a written report. In case dangerous conditions are found proper orders may be issued by authorities having jurisdiction and if alterations will not remove dangerous conditions the premises may be permanently vacated as a public nuisance. Proper ventilation is one of the most important considerations in motion picture legislation. In case the ventilation is bad proper windows may be installed or artificial means provided either or both of which should be entirely adequate. Many of the premises are unclean and filthy. High standards of cleanliness are possible, provided proper methods of cleaning are prescribed by law and a sufficient force provided for the purposes of inspection. The law should require that the premises should be kept well lighted during exhibition. This can be done without injuring the quality of the pictures. Proper lighting is very necessary to prevent improper and offensive conduct on the part of some individuals of low moral standards who frequent all public places. The seats should be securely fastened to the floor, otherwise the results may be disastrous in case of a fire or panic. The width of aisles and exits must be based on the seating capacity of the premises.

### **The Stage May Well Be Abolished**

In case there be a stage and the building does not conform to the usual requirements of the laws for theatres, the stage should be abolished. The elimination of the stage eliminates the fire hazard and the cheap and offensive vaudeville at the same time. In place of the vaudeville the law may well require the substitution of music, song and recitation. A proper system of permanent, expert

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inspection should be provided at all times to see that the requirements of the law are carried out.

It must always be remembered that retroactive legislation must be reasonable, otherwise it will be held to be unconstitutional and of no avail. In the long run the competition of modern, well-built motion picture theatres offering comfort and convenience to patrons will do what legislation may be unable to do,—eliminate many of the undesirable places from the business.

**Can the Cost of Construction Be Lessened?** The future can be safe-guarded by providing proper laws for new theatres. It has been

pointed out that the cost of building under the theatre law is practically prohibitive for motion picture theatres in New York City. Can the cost of construction be lessened? Can the seating capacity be increased beyond 300 without the drastic requirements of the theatre law? Can proper safety and sanitation be provided for the public at the same time? The answer is yes. It is a well-known fact that the stage, including the curtains, scenery and dressing room is the great fire hazard in any theatre. This hazard can be removed by providing that there shall be no stage or scenery. With a removal of the stage, the fire hazard, the seating capacity may be safely increased up to from 500 to 1,000, depending upon proper arrangements of seats, aisles and exits. With the increased seating capacity and lessened cost of construction there comes a greater revenue, which makes it possible to build and operate with a reasonable profit a motion picture theatre that affords comfort, convenience and safety to the public. The main floor, or auditorium, should be on a level with the sidewalk. If there be a gallery it should have outside fire escapes and stairways not leading to the main floor of the building. Stairways leading to the interior of the building increase the danger from panic and fire and are always objectionable. The danger from panic may be even greater than the dangers from fire. The panic hazard must be provided against by proper aisles and exits.

It is believed that the motion picture ordinance, now before the Board of Aldermen of the city of New York, drafted by the Mayor's Commission is a model for new theatres and the first of its kind in America.

### Educational Opportunities

The public thus far has overlooked a great opportunity for the use of motion pictures in the educational field. While it may be impos-

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sible to require the exhibition of such pictures by legislation it is possible to obtain the exhibition of the same to a much greater extent through the co-operation of public officers and institutions. It is true that many so-called educational films have been manufactured. There seems to be no proper method of distribution. The so-called theatrical interests and exhibitors do not as a rule promote the educational film. It is not their purpose to provide education so much as it is amusement. It seems very desirable to provide some method, not only for the manufacture, but also for the exhibition of such films. As a means toward this end such pictures might be exhibited in the public schools and recreation centres by the municipalities. It is a noteworthy fact that millions and millions of dollars have been invested by the public in public school buildings which are used little, if at all, during the evenings. Such buildings might well be used for the exhibition of educational motion pictures. In many instances legislation may be required. In some instances it is a mere question of administrative detail. Such exhibition may be had at slight cost to the patrons. The only expense would be for the operator and the rent of the films. The admission fee need not be more than three or five cents.

### **Might Improve More than Legislation**

High-class competition of this sort would do more to improve conditions than mere legislation.

### **What about Unaccom- panied Children?**

There has been much discussion as to the advisability of admitting unaccompanied children to motion picture shows. Three States have laws providing that children must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Such laws are usually not enforceable because public officials, the courts and the public to a great extent are not in sympathy with such provisions. If children are to be admitted it would seem that they should be admitted after school hours and on public holidays, exclusive of evenings, with a further provision that a separate section be reserved exclusively for their use.

### **Sources of Opposition to Legislation**

The obstacles to be overcome in securing proper motion picture regulation are difficult. The chief opposition is likely to come from the vested interests and particularly from those engaged in the vaudeville and theatrical business. The motion picture theatre has

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become a great competitor with the regular theatre and especially the cheaper classes of theatres and the loss of business to the theatres has been tremendous. For these reasons the theatrical interests are likely to be opposed to any constructive motion picture regulation regardless of its necessity.

While New York City undoubtedly has the worst motion picture conditions in America, active steps are being taken to remedy them. A commission appointed by the Mayor, has after careful study and consultation with experts, prepared a law which undoubtedly is a model motion picture law for America.

**The National Board of Censorship Helpful** It is fortunate that the National Board of Censorship of New York City has complete information as to existing motion picture laws prevailing not only in the United States but abroad. In this sense it has become a clearing house for information for the entire country. It is suggested that civic bodies contemplating legislative changes would do well to communicate with the National Board of Censorship at Number Fifty, Madison Avenue, New York City.

Public-spirited individuals who desire to serve their fellow-citizens will find a fertile field of opportunity in motion picture legislation. Conditions which are favorable to disease and tuberculosis are to be eliminated. Conditions which make possible the loss of life through fire and panic are to be remedied. Greater comfort, convenience and opportunity may be provided for millions of the wage-earning classes. The masses may be educated through the motion picture as well as through the columns of the newspaper. For these reasons I commend your active consideration of proper motion picture regulation in your home community.

## *DRAMATIC PLAY AS A FORM OF COMMUNITY RECREATION\**

MRS. AUGUST BELMONT

President, Educational Dramatic League, New York City

There is very real recreation in amateur theatricals, and this is so popular that you find amateur dramatic clubs in connection with nearly every school, church and settlement, including many places where men and women work.

\* Address given at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, Richmond, Virginia, May 7, 1913

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### **In All of Us**

The dramatic instinct is in all of us, and with proper and careful guidance can be utilized for the improvement of the whole human being. Carefully selected plays, produced by someone who knows how to give the full benefit to the player, may teach, not only diction, bearing, vocabulary, but originality, patriotism, morals.

Lately I have visited several reform schools for boys. At each I have asked how many boys is it estimated from records and supervision after they leave school, become honest citizens. The estimates averaged from sixty to seventy-five per cent. Yet all are committed for some bad deed or deeds. Isn't it reasonable to suppose that in many cases the badness comes from a *misplaced* dramatic instinct? As an example of what I mean, I know of a "gang" of boys near Hull House in Chicago who performed every conceivable kind of incorrigible act for the sheer joy and pleasure of being arrested—so that they might have a triumphal exit, in the midst of great excitement on the part of the neighborhood, riding in the "buz" wagon, as they call it, to the sound of a clanging bell. The one who could devise sufficient kinds of cussedness to be arrested more often than the others became the acknowledged hero,—the leader of the gang.

### **The Right Kind of Hero—or the Wrong?**

To catch such youths as these before leaving school, or just after becoming young wage earners, and steady their ideas as to what constitutes a hero, let them play at being some of the biggest and finest the world's history and literature have produced. Who knows but such assumption of character when they are in the stage of sensitive evolution, by the forcefulness of impressions to which they study to give expression, may not develop, say at least a desire, to be the right kind of hero or heroine?

### **Develops the Child All Round**

Everywhere in colleges, high schools, public schools, settlement and church clubs, they are realizing the value of these amateur dramatic groups. Until lately, however, they have developed because of the eternal child in us all, which whispers, "Let's pretend." But teachers dealing with children in the public schools, many of whom speak little or no English in their homes, find the best way to interest the children in our country and language is not to teach hard rules of grammar and rhetoric, but to let the children "speak a piece." This arouses not only interest but enthusiasm.

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They watch their pronunciation carefully, and as one teacher who had just produced a play in her school, said, "It develops the child all round." Not only does it bring about a marked improvement but an ambition to improve is apparent. A boy who wants to play the king hardly waits to be told to stand erect and assume a kingly bearing.

This living of noble thoughts, even if it is only in the world of make-believe, must leave its stamp on the mind and the body.

### **What Makes a Villain?**

Then, too, besides training the young in statistics and mathematics, in how to work, isn't it worth while to add to their training a little

knowledge of that vital part of them,—their emotions,—to show them the critical moment at which the villain in the play becomes the villain, and how the same emotion which has brought this about, differently handled, could have made him a hero? It is strange, but in the majority there burns, perhaps dimly, but nevertheless burning, a desire to be a hero.

Young folks all love this broader, better developed game of make-believe, and try hard for the honor and responsibility of the leading characters. It trains their memories; if properly taught, robs them of self-consciousness, helps them to a confidence before groups of people, is a training for those who some day may become public speakers. And so in the firm belief that this branch of recreation is also an important part of education, the Educational Dramatic League was organized in January, 1913, to promote the educational value, to raise the standard of the amateur dramatic work being done in all parts of New York City. This needs not new equipment but co-operation with organizations already in operation. The League aims to form clubs when desired in communities where they do not exist and to supply competent teachers who will train the players.

### **League Beginnings**

We have taken, as the nucleus of what we hope to accomplish, the original Children's Theatre, which caused such favorable comment, interest and encouragement from noted thinkers.

Since the Children's Theatre closed, the Educational Players, a group of young wage earners, clerks, salesmen, have worked along the same lines under the name of The Educational Players. The principal aim of the Educational Dramatic League is to bring to many the opportunities this one group has had and to teach

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teachers how to use the dramatic instinct to the greatest entertainment and educational advantage of the player and, consequently, the audience.

We believe if we can take the work begun at the Children's Theatre, the methods and principles of which were a discovery, as the work progressed and not the idea with which the Theatre originated, we can produce the same results, not in one group alone, but among many.

### **Not a School of Acting**

The Educational Dramatic League is not a self-appointed censor of plays, nor is it a school of acting.

It only differentiates its own method from the professional and the usual amateur dramatic productions. We believe the production is not the main thing, but the player, and the player not the audience must be entertained and interested, though it naturally follows that in developing your player you improve his work, and so both player and audience profit.

### **The Play Must Make for Good**

In regard to the plays we plan to use, for the use of our Play Selecting Committee, our Dramatic Director, Mrs. Emma Sheridan Fry, drew up a few rules which may interest you.

"The play must make for good. An educational play must present a life problem sanely; and helpfully offer the player field for the study of life as he is likely to find it in his development as a human being. No matter what the problem presented, it should deepen the player's knowledge of good, and his grasp on the law that the ultimate service of evil is to establish good. Any play that forces the player into a field of violent emotions is unsuitable. Unless there be compensating educational profit, no player should be put through death agonies and insanity, or other deviations from the normal. It is rather the province of the educational play to let loose impulses of gaiety, health, the lighter heroisms, the graciousness of every-day life, the sturdiness that attacks the daily tasks and finds happiness therein."

### **Beyond the Work-a-day World**

We believe that all work and no play makes Jack indeed a dull—or worse—a discontented boy. Work is a privilege, and work well done with pride in the doing is a source of deep and real pleasure. But days, weeks, months spent in working, eating and sleeping can lead only to dullness or discontent.

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Because a man or woman uses a typewriter, sells groceries, farms or scrubs is no reason for supposing that he or she may not have the soul of a poet, only he uses the typewriter, the shop or the farm as a more profitable means of earning a living.

But everyone profits by knowing something about a subject totally different from the one at which he works; first, because change of occupation is recreation and this particular form of recreation is a stimulus to the imagination, as well as an outlet for self-expression. I have read in a delightful book that "Adam had but to imagine a bird and it was born into life, and that he created all things out of himself by an unflagging fancy." By imagination one may reach the stars, a journey well worth the taking.

**Three Classes for Teachers** We count among the principal things we have accomplished since January the establishment

of three classes for teachers: the theory and principles of educational dramatics, which course is held in Teachers College at Columbia University; the speech and action class held in the recreation centers and in Public School 63; the class for educational principles as applied to two plays which have been especially selected for a competition this spring.

Prizes have been offered for the best club performance of each play. We have already over forty teachers studying, more than half of whom have come directly from their own clubs or settlements to learn the educational method. There are eight clubs rehearsing in "Pygmalion and Galatea," the senior play, and ten in the "House of the Heart," the junior play.

**Two Plays for Competitive Production** Arrangements are well under way for these performances in public school auditoriums.

There are forty-four to select from, thanks to the generous co-operation of the Board of Education. In June when the competitions are over, there will be two or three picked casts which will, on certain holidays, play in the park auditoriums, of which there are three, placed at our disposal for this purpose by the Commissioner of Parks. Several musical clubs have volunteered to play overtures and incidental music.

Next spring the League plans a Shakesperean Festival of A Winter's Tale. The cast will be selected from the best players of the various clubs belonging to the League with the Educational Players as a nucleus. Such a performance involving a money and artistic responsibility is a fine influence for the whole cast. Some

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day we hope to have a group of League players who will be invited abroad as the Hull House Players were invited to visit Dublin.

Already arrangements are being made for the exchange of plays and casts of high standard from one neighborhood in New York to another, thus giving greater zest to the work and pleasure to a greater number of people.

**For the Parents, Too** Then, too, the plays will bring recreation nearer to parents of children in congested districts who have little time and less money for amusements, with the added joy that their children will be creating this pleasure.

We hope in time these groups will have their own designer of costumes and scenery and write their own plays. To make this a nearer possibility, the League has opened a play-writing competition. Two small money prizes will be offered for the best idea for a play and the best play of three acts. Should these winning ideas prove exceptional, we shall assist the authors in their publication, or, if they are adaptable to educational dramatic purposes we shall produce the play with a selected group of players.

A committee of wise judges has been formed to decide the momentous question of "which shall it be."

**A Dramatic Library** For our members, we have a library of dramatic literature and shall have in addition a list of plays suitable for educational purposes, and with each, explanatory notes for the guidance of teachers.

All over the country there is a strong wave of interest drama-ward. There are individual groups working along educational lines, but I know of no other movement at all like this. In time I hope we may all co-operate. The League has not the slightest idea of competition or opposition. Its object is national, not local. And we believe with Emerson, "If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse trap than his neighbor, though he build his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door."

**Not Recruiting for the Professional Stage** For fear of any misunderstanding I wish to assure you we are not attempting to create actors or gather recruits for the professional stage. If in the course of the League's work we come across one or two, I'm sure no one could object, but we wish simply to assist those who, unaided, spend much time and energy in a hap-hazard fashion, rehearsing plays that are of low standard, ethically and

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artistically. We are not dealing with dramatic talent but with that natural instinct which is the cry in each human being to find outlet in expression. The work can be for all in that it places recreation within the reach of all; but it also forms an important part of what is called "prevention," that fore-thoughtful ounce of prevention which in the lives of many people has been worth ten pounds of cure.

### **It Is by Utterance We Live**

In closing I should like to quote a passage from a letter which seems to me pertinent to the subject, written from his prison cell by a famous man to his friend. He says,—“Whether or not this letter does good to narrow natures and hectic brains, to me it has done good. I have ‘cleaned my bosom of much perilous stuff.’ I need not remind you that mere expression is to an artist the supreme and only mode of life. It is by *utterance* that we live. Of the many, many things for which I have to thank the Governor, there is none for which I am more grateful than his permission to write fully to you. For nearly two years I have had within a growing burden of bitterness, much of which I have now got rid. On the other side of the prison wall, there are some poor black soot-besmirched trees which are just breaking out into buds of an almost shrill green. I know quite well what they are going through;—they are finding expression.”

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J. F. TAINTOR

Professor of English, Ripon College, Ripon, Wisconsin

The Ripon Pageant was a small affair; it enlisted not more than five hundred people as participants. It was an inexpensive enterprise; it cost not more than six hundred dollars. It was a self-sustaining undertaking; it more than paid for itself. It was a spectacle of brief duration; it was given on only one day and covered just three hours. But the Ripon Pageant was successful. It was well done. It met with enthusiastic approval. It made a fine impression. That after all is the main thing. I think I am wholly justified in saying that the city of Ripon never

\* Address given at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, Richmond, Virginia, May 7, 1913

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went to bed better satisfied with itself, never turned out the lights with a more genuine glow of pleasure at having done something worth while and having done it well, than it did the night after the pageant on June 10, 1910. We all of us wrapped the drapery of our couch about us and lay down to pleasant dreams. I know for myself that I went to bed that night having dropped from my shoulders a burden as large if not as heavy as that carried by Christian in the old-time picture illustrating Bunyan's famous allegory.

**Community  
Self-appreciation** For the next week we were all like little children saying to each other, "Didn't we do that well?" I will not stop to moralize upon it, but that experience—that modest yet real community self-appreciation, begotten of a united community effort is worth far more than the spectacle itself.

In 1908 I witnessed the Oxford Pageant. The word "Pageant" at that time had little meaning to me. It suggested some of those interminable affairs that Motley describes as so delighting the Dutch. I first learned of the Oxford pageant from an Oxford lady who came into our train compartment at Birmingham. I tell this because it illustrates the way to make a pageant successful. This lady, then an entire stranger, interested herself in our party and insisted that we must hasten on to Oxford. While at Stratford I received a letter and a telegram from her giving me further instructions. Of course I went. That is the way to secure spectators for a pageant, for every individual to talk it everywhere and enthusiastically. The Ripon Pageant was really due to this lady from Oxford, because it would not have been if I had not gone to Oxford, at her invitation.

The suggestion that in our way we might have a pageant at Ripon was made by that member of my family who makes all the wise suggestions. I easily fell in with the suggestion. But—lest any one should think that there was any predisposition in a college town that made the idea take root easily—let me say that there was scarcely another person in Ripon at that time who had any idea that pageantry had any relation whatever to modern life, or who knew more about a pageant than I did when my friend urged my coming to Oxford.

**Afraid at First** That same year, before the idea had taken root in American soil, I suggested the at-

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tempt at Ripon. But people were afraid of it, I was afraid of it; so we lost the opportunity of being the first—at least in the west—to do a fine thing.

**A Second Attempt**      The next year I tried again. We might still if we hastened be almost the first to deal with local history, and I screwed my courage to the sticking point. I began with the senior class at the college. They appointed a committee. That was the first peg driven. You must drive a first stake somewhere.

The college authorities were next interested and a co-operating committee of the college faculty was named. Then I consulted the president of the Commercial Club. He was a man of some vision, and he saw the possibilities. At a full meeting of the club the case was stated. There was not much enthusiasm on the part of the business men, but a committee was appointed here also. The women's clubs and similar organizations and the public schools were next visited and more committees named. These various committees were then made into one central committee and we were fairly on our way towards a community pageant.

**Difficult to Preserve  
Unity**

The different scenes to be presented had already been fairly determined and they were assigned to different local organizations to work up in proper fashion. This interested a variety of people, but it created a difficulty sure to be met with if this method is followed. It made it very difficult to preserve anything like unity or logical coherence in the pageant. If the affair had not been pretty definitely conceived before hand, and if the directions had not been explicit, we should have failed.

So many people at work, people with different tastes and varying ideas, some eager to introduce odd or eccentric features made it well nigh impossible to make each scene dignified and free from buffoonery and at the same time full of action or movement.

**Nine Historic Scenes  
and an Epilogue**

As the result of the preliminary preparations and of the subsequent labors of committees and actors, we put on a pageant of nine historic scenes and an epilogue or symbolic scene. The pageant was divided into three parts; before each part a sort of Greek chorus recited a prologue outlining the events to follow.

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The first part dealt with traditions; the second part with local history; the third part with events in which local history touched national history. The epilogue was a sort of illogical, but natural recognition of the senior class by whom nominally the affair was started.

**As to Material** It may be of interest now to know something of the material with which we had to do.

Ripon has a population of about four thousand. There is a college on the hill attended by possibly three hundred students. The town is conservative. It does not take easily to new ventures. It does not lightly plunge into brilliant schemes devised by the vain imaginations of college professors. The lure of the pageant was like the tempting fly of which the trout is wary. It took some time to persuade them to take the bait.

There were no leaders for an event of the sort. I had seen a pageant—that was our capital stock. We had no stage artists, no expert directors, no trained or experienced actors, no one dramatic genius. There was no one who for any reason whatever could be singled out as peculiarly fitted to act as an executive head for an undertaking, which to nearly all citizens was as vague and nebulous as are the affairs on the planet Mars. I say this merely to suggest that a pageant of this sort does not demand leading talent. It calls rather for genuine interest and for hard work.

**Suggestive Incidents Easily Discovered** On the other hand, it must be said, we had as a town unusual material for a successful pageant of local history. We did not need to go beyond local and neighborhood history for our facts. We drew water out of our own wells. That much was to our advantage.

Jean Nicolet landed at Green Bay and made his approach to the Indians in a most dramatic manner. Green Bay is near enough Ripon for pageant purposes. Indians and Frenchmen, long-barreled pistols and crimson damask cloaks with which Nicolet astounded the redmen, made a fine starting point.

The Jesuit Missionary Marquette and the explorer Joliet, on their way to the Mississippi, followed the course of a near-by river. Missionaries and adventurers, wigwams and bark canoes, priestly blessings and Indian orations afforded suggestions for a second spectacle.

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Our beautiful Green Lake, the finest resort in the country, is crowded with Indian memories, and we easily found a legend that contributed much to the effect of the pageant.

Ripon was founded by the famous Wisconsin Phalanx, a company of Fourierites, or a communistic brotherhood. Their coming in ox-carts—men, women, children,—and their later social life furnished excellent material.

That great national organization—the Republican Party—just now enjoying a well earned rest—was almost born at Ripon. The building, a little school house in which the birth was deferred, now stands on the college campus. The Republican party received its name at Ripon; its organization was planned, but with a modesty unusual among politicians the organization was deferred because it seemed presumptuous for so few to start a national party. The honor of being called the birth-place therefore belongs to Jackson, Michigan, but we made all the arrangements at Ripon. That made good material.

Other scenes in connection with college and community were easily available. There were some stirring scenes in Ripon during the sixties. All that was necessary therefore in order to procure a pageant was a bit of imagination, a larger bit of genuine personal interest, and a still larger amount of hard work.

### **With Nature for Scenery**

A word now as to the machinery. We used very little artificial scenery. The locating of a temporary tree here and there, and some freshly cut boughs were all we needed to assist the advantages nature furnished. We provided a tent, minus the walls, to protect the spectators from sun and rain and trusted providence to keep the actors dry. We advertised with some thoroughness. We had our tickets on sale long enough before hand to insure success. We raised a guarantee fund to protect us from loss—though we did not call on the fund for help. We prepared a booklet of reasonable size.

The practical difficulties in the way of such an undertaking are many. The uncertainty, in some places, of the weather always makes a problem. If you live where it never rains there will be no trouble. In our case, we could not postpone; we had just one chance. Fortunately providence smiled on us that day; otherwise the whole thing would have been a failure. Usually, however, postponement is possible.

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### **Costumes Difficult**

Again, the costuming is a difficulty. In the first place in the average modern community, our American costumes never have been of the sort that lend themselves to spectacles. In this part of the world with colonial or revolutionary history to draw upon, there will be little difficulty, but the ordinary black or gray or brown of sack coat and pressed trousers does not enrich or illuminate the landscape.

As far as possible individuals provided their own costumes. In some cases the women's clubs took charge of them. But for all the prominent figures, and of course for the Indians, we depended on the costumer from a nearby city. I may say here that in spite of the confusion of the dressing quarters, we lost few pieces of costume. Strange to report—three pairs of old fashioned heavy top-boots vanished into the air—where they went to, I have never discovered, but they cost us five dollars a pair. Beware of borrowing—for any uncertain persons—the old fashioned and much prized dress of some one's grandmother. People are unbelievably careless about borrowed things. They are not returned; they are left in a heap anywhere; they are abused. I know of an old heirloom of this sort that one heedless person deliberately cut up and made over, of one bonnet belonging to a great grandmother thrown out as rubbish. It is almost impossible to maintain oversight over such things. It is dangerous to borrow.

### **Indifference to Be Reckoned with**

Rehearsals are always difficult where large numbers are involved. But it is a comfort to know that somehow or other the rehearsals accomplish things—even when one is most disheartened by the common inattention to them. A difficulty that is not always met, but that may be encountered is the indifference or the inertia of the public. As a matter of fact I was not sure till three days before the pageant that we should touch the community at all. There was interest, but there was a sort of feeling—kept in the background—that it would not be much of an affair after all. On the day of the last rehearsal when some of the college boys appeared on the streets as wild Indians people began to take notice. This was the beginning of the movement which brought the crowd. But the people in some

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communities are uncertain, and it is necessary to convince them that something worth while is going to take place.

Difficulties however vary in different places. They are sure to be met and they must be overcome. It is perhaps more to the point to note some of the elements of success.

**They Didn't Wait!** An important element of success is the element of time. Delays are dangerous, tedious, annoying. We began on time, we moved on without intermission, we were through just when we planned to be through. One of the most delightful memories I have of the occasion is of a young woman, costumed for public notice, who came to the appointed place just in time to find that the procession to which she belonged was already before the spectators. I can see her now as she stamped her foot and cried out, "They might have waited." The fact that they did not wait was one of the secrets of success. No one or not more than one missed the young lady—everyone would have felt the delay.

Scene followed close upon scene. To wait between scenes inevitably suggests that something is being made ready, adjusted, fixed up. It destroys the impression of spontaneity. People do not like to be made conscious of machinery. The promptness with which the affair goes off is an element of great importance. The best recipe for failure is squeaking machinery.

Like this is the second element to be noted—action, movement. People like action. I am afraid of the symbolic pageant. It is action, life in motion that captures the spectator. I think one of the most effective scenes in the pageant was one in which the actors really violated instructions and acted on instinct.

**More Realistic  
than Expected**

A frontiersman had been trapped in his cabin by the Indians. From within he had killed off a number of the redskins. His enemies however gradually crept nearer, shooting fire-tipped arrows at his cabin. We were afraid of a realistic blaze and had advised the Indians to stop short of a real fire. But the redskins forgot instructions. They crept up to the walls and they played the genuine savage by making a genuine fire. The paper walls went up in flame and smoke, to the great delight of the spectators, as the Indians captured the man who was smoked and burned out. It helped the action wondrously.

A third element that made for success was the variety of

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people interested. Our aim was to engage in the work of preparation as many types as possible. It may be wise even to lose a little in the grade of work done for the sake of enlisting a wider circle. There was scarcely any phase of life in the community that was not drawn upon either for work in preparation or for participation in the pageant itself.

I may name one other element that in our case added to the measure of success. The pageant was to nine out of ten people a distinct surprise. It was so much more of an affair than they looked for, was so much better done than was anticipated that the unexpected excellence really added materially to the enthusiasm of approval, and hearty approval is what makes success.

**Is It Worth While?** But after all, the question to one who has been through the experience, comes with insistence, "Is it worth while?" What comes of it? Is the result valuable enough to pay for the labor? I believe it is. If I knew just how to secure new and effective material, I should like to try again.

In the first place the practical feature of instruction is not to be ignored. A pageant is a teacher. When it deals, as ours dealt, with local history it may do more towards familiarizing the people with their own history than could be done by many courses of lectures. It condenses nebulous matter so that where men have seen a mist, they see a star. It represents in present day terms the actions of long ago. We see, we understand, we remember as we could do as the result of no other method. I presume the people of Ripon learned from the scenes of the pageant more about the Wisconsin Phalanx—their successful experiment, their happy conditions, their friendly dissolution—than they had learned from all the records of their doings.

**Too Costly if Only a Play Day** In the second place, the rural pageant, or any pageant, has value because of its effect on the local self-consciousness. Let me say here that merely as a play day—merely as one day like Pippa's New Year's Day, such an event is not worth while. As a day on which the community takes a vacation and enjoys the freedom of play, it is too costly. I am interested in play—we all are. I lived for two months a year ago where I looked out upon

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a German school. I speak within bounds when I say that the children were on the playground a quarter of the school time. They played for business—and the teachers were with them. That was good—far better than our American ten-minute recess.

But one play day for the community that costs so much time and effort is not worth while. The amusement is too expensive, nevertheless it is worth while, not for the play, but for the effect of the play. It is so to say a dress-up day for the community. It is a time that puts the community upon its dignity. Apart from the religious value of Sunday, the seventh day is of incalculable worth to the community as a day for one's best clothes. One has a sense of manhood, of independence, of self-approval when one has on one's Sunday best that one can never attain in loose slippers and collarless shirt.

I have heard of a woman, given to dress and indifferent to religion, who once said that all the supposed comfort one might gain from religion, could never equal the satisfaction one took in a perfectly fitting dress. Her philosophy may be questioned, but unquestionably it is worth while for a community as well as for a man sometimes to dress up.

That is precisely what a rural pageant does, it makes the community for the day hold up its head and walk erect as does the man in epaulets and gold stripes. That is a good thing for any community. It is one of the factors silent and unnoticed, that go towards making up the community character.

### **The Beauty of the Afterglow**

Another result of such community undertaking is, as I have already suggested, to be found in the afterglow. This result can neither be weighed nor measured, it cannot be tabulated nor rendered visible. But it is a result of real value.

A gentleman was at my home one evening some years ago. He was a man of considerable means, but a man who seldom dealt in large benevolences. He had just given a small but still a generous and wholly voluntary gift to some local interest. I congratulated him upon it. "Yes," he said, "it does give one a sort of glow." Now I am of the opinion that that "glow" was one of the most valuable experiences of the year for that man. It passed away, but it was not wholly lost. Something like that is true of the afterglow of the pageant. It has vanished. We may ask with Wordsworth—"whither is fled the visionary glow?

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Where is it now, the glory and the dream?" It is no more—and yet we may say also—

"Oh, joy, that in our embers.  
Is something that doth live."

It is not wholly gone. It was a good thing for the community to know that thrill of pleasure. It remains like the many feelings of "unremembered pleasures, such perhaps as have no slight or trivial influence" on a "good man's life." If for no other reason, for this alone it is worth while.

Finally, a pageant is worth while because it does for us what every day life cannot do. Every day life, if we only knew it, is full of romance, but it seems dull. Every life here would easily furnish material for more than one thrilling romance, but we do not see it. We live in prose, not in poetry. We deal with hard facts, not with colored fancies. We find our romances in the novel, not in our own experience.

Anything that shows us the true idealism of life is of power. Anything that strips away for us the commonplace and makes the beauty and the romance and the idealism of life appear is worth while.

**Every Man a Poet**      The founders of Ripon came in ox-carts. They lived lives of toil and of hardship. They did not see the romance of it. But when we saw them in the pageant, we forgot the dull drudgery of their life and there arose before us an idyllic picture of life as it really is. So of every scene. We saw to the heart of things—we saw life as it really is, a thing of beauty. Life is a divine ideal, and the toils and hardship are but the husks that in time fall off, and leave for us the "vision splendid," the glory of which shall not pass away from the earth.

In "The Return of Peter Grimm" as you may remember, the song of the clown lures the boy toward the circus—and when instead of the circus he is taken from the world, it is still to the far-away song of the circus clown now transfigured, glorified as the song of the angels, that he passes into the celestial world. The real becomes the ideal. So our Wisconsin Phalanx came to Ripon in rumbling ox-carts. But we, in the pageant, saw them, in the same ox-cart indeed, but all the rumbling and the jolting were gone, and they passed before as ideal men and women.

## ART IN THE RECREATION CENTERS \*

WILL LA FAVOR

Director, Washington Park, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Emerson has said: "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful we must carry it with us, or we find it not."

America, with her great store of wealth, with wonderful art collections and good pictures gathered from every clime and people, has realized that art is needed, and must be not for the chosen few, but for the masses. For too long a time the humble had to be content with sordid things. They all needed help to lead up to brighter aspirations and deeper spiritual life. They needed the refining influence of real art. They needed it in abundance. Our land is too new to hope ever to catch up with Japan in the art spirit —Japan where every day work is every day play. Hours of labor are not hours to shrink from, but to look forward to, the time far too short to express fully poetry and song on exquisite Cloisonnes, silk brocades, delicate carvings, castings or metal work.

**The City Beautiful** Just now almost every city, town and hamlet in this country has caught the cry "For a city beautiful"—not a visionary city for another life, but a real, a tangible dwelling place, a city with pure water, clean streets, shade trees, a city modeled for the humble as well as for the exalted.

Frequently in cities where bond issues come up for the vote of the people, bonds to make "The City Beautiful," the people vote it down and the commission is without funds to carry out its dreams. Why should the day laborer help pay for the beautiful plazas, the grand boulevards, the magnificent parks—where he finds no benefit or pleasure for himself, family or neighbors? The parks are too far away and street car fare for the family is too great an expense and the laborer argues that if the rich people want these things, they may pay the bills. Who can blame the poor man? He has looked upon the æsthetic, the beautiful, as belonging peculiarly to that privileged class, the rich. He has been blinded from seeing any pleasure he may receive from it. It is all too true that it is only of late that any considerable consideration has been given him and his fellows, to bring any of the things to satisfy the eye, things beautiful that would help rest the weary mind and body

\* Address given at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Playground and Recreation Association of America, Richmond, Virginia, May 8, 1913

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after the hard day's toil. There are open air concerts within reach of some, sometimes good music in cheap theatres, but the eye, the window of the soul, is the last to be freed from offense.

**Let It Be for All** Why can't the common council, the planning commission, the playground board, start their city beautiful in the very midst of real life, in or about the so-called slums, not necessarily destroying great blocks of houses, to widen the arteries leading from the homes of the rich to the business centres, but by cleaning, paving, parking and planting, and then somewhere near placing a playground, a real park, be it ever so small, beautiful in itself; making this, as it were, a spot from which the beautifying of a whole city may radiate; greatest care being taken in all arrangement of trees, grass plots, flowers, and pools or fountains.

**The Field House  
Should Be Artistic** A field house, where something of refined living may be given, must be an example of good architecture, however simple and inexpensive. A mere shed for shelter is not enough. If it is to be a house of any proportion, then the artistic effects within must be considered—plenty of daylight and an abundance of warm soft light at night, a homelike and comfortable atmosphere; walls of light decoration, furniture, plants and pictures all carefully selected and placed, giving a feeling of satisfaction and rest, a real oasis in the great desert.

**Nearer God** There need be no fear that the spot shall be too beautiful, too far removed from the appreciation of the people. It would be well if all children and adults could be impressed as one of our little five-year-olds who, with a number of other children, was taken to a great conservatory. When they reached the beautiful palm house, he crept up to the playground worker, and drawing her down to him, whispered, "Is this where God lives?" Would it not be well if all playgrounds and social settlements, had more of that atmosphere?

**Pictures for the  
Field House** Good pictures, clear prints of master-pieces, have proved such educators that hardly too much emphasis can be placed on their value in the field house. One of the teachers of a Boston school purchased numbers of small pictures for her classes. In a comparatively short time little tots came bringing pennies to the teacher saying, "My mother wants you to buy her some pictures just like

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those you have on the wall." A real work had been accomplished in helping the children to find something of the spirit of the pictures. More than one child will declare he knows how the angels look because he has seen their pictures. Good sculpturing should be familiar to all. All should know something of the great artists and their works. Strange how many know of poets and musicians, their names being household words, while artists are almost unknown!

One of the beautiful groups of modern marbles is "The First Burial," Adam and Eve carrying their dead son Abel. All are nude figures with no suggestion of nakedness and it is seldom that any child or adult looks at this beautiful trio without exclaiming, "How beautiful!" Another impressive and really spiritual group is by Mr. Daniel C. French, "Death and the Sculptor." The beautiful figure of Death, the face of white, is more than half hidden, one hand gently touching the hand of the young sculptor, the other holding a bunch of poppies. The sculptor has but half finished his relief of the Sphinx typifying Silence and Mystery. Death must have lost much of its terror for hosts of people since Mr. French gave us this group. Every center ought to have good photographs of these.

### **Art as Essential as Music**

While all concede that music is an essential part of every boy's and girl's education, the kindred art is still considered by many as a questionable part of the school curriculum. Much of the so-called art taught in our public schools, drawing by count or other mechanical methods, has been deadening to all inspiration and originality. It comes within the province of the social settlement and playground center to foster a broader art, where children and adults may find means of expressing themselves in drawing and clay as naturally as they would in music or poetry. Almost every child longs to express himself by some of these means. More than a score of boys have sidled up to me when I have been playing in clay with the half-whispered request, "I wish I could make something with that clay." Little lads and young men have played from two and a half to three hours at a time without the least sign of weariness or a disposition to stop. The results of the effort were often crude in the extreme, yet in every case the worker felt as though he had accomplished great things, and above all had had such "a fine time."

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### **Even a Little Reaches Far**

Art is no longer picture-making alone, in fact that is but a very small part of it. Art should be found here, as in Japan, touching every nook and corner from the simplest article of decoration in our homes to the great cathedrals with their graceful spires. Art in its simplicity should be made practical for all mankind, for all can make use of it. Even the butcher and the baker, as well as the small grocer will display his wares to much better advantage and give less offense to the eye if he has even a small touch of art. Art has many doors, not a few of which open directly into the commercial world, as dressmaking, millinery, tailoring, window dressing, designing furniture, wall paper, rugs, fabrics, decorations for special occasions, engraving, painting, portrait painting, illustrating, sculpturing, and the greatest art of all, architecture.

### **Into the Homes**

No child or adult is frittering away his time when studying any line which opens up the avenues to the world beautiful. There must be art not only in galleries and field houses, but more of it in the homes. There would be greater happiness, less unrest, among parents and children if there were more consideration of art in the selection of papers, good pictures, well framed and properly hung, simple carpets or rugs, rugs which do not demand attention when one enters the room, and a few choice or simple flowers placed naturally in the vases. There is not the time in this busy land to spend seasons in studying the arrangement of flowers as they do in Cherry Blossom land, but attention and a little time would be well spent in teaching children how to arrange even a single flower with its leaves to make it a delight and satisfaction to the eye.

### **The Message of the Flowers**

Hardly too much stress can be placed on the importance of the Flower Day as carried on in some playground centres. Adults as well as children long for these touches of nature. There is no playground or social center but has touching stories of the influence of a flower upon some unhappy life. At one time a group of Italians stopped a social worker who had been distributing bouquets by the hundreds. Though the empty box was shown, with nothing left but broken petals and leaves of snowballs, by signs one working man begged for these. Taking them in his grimy hands, he buried his face in the green, the tears streaming down his cheeks. What

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more beautiful, refining, spiritualizing influence can be exerted than that of beautiful flowers?

### **Beauty in Dress**

Hardly any greater field of helpfulness is open for the playground worker than guiding boys and girls in their dress and personal care. It is safe to say that many are the girls who have unwittingly been immodest in their dress and have been led astray by so doing. It is but the natural order of life that womenkind should be beautiful in the eyes of man, that she should fascinate him and the man please the woman. Girls should be taught the selection of colors best adapted to their complexion and conditions, helped to be as beautiful as possible by all legitimate means, with the hair dressed to accentuate the best lines of the face, no matter what the prevailing style may be. In all things they should be taught how to please the best and highest and not the lowest and meanest in man.

### **Keep the Beauty Brought from the Home Country**

Impress upon all foreigners that the hand-made garments, ornaments, cooking utensils which they brought into this Land of Promise are not to be discarded for the cheap, ready-made, machine-produced articles, which are without beauty, interest or individuality, even though doubtless many colors which were in perfect harmony in their own land under their sky may seem harsh and out of place in their new surroundings.

### **And Always the Beauty of Nature**

Much might be done to make life happier if children had the beauties of nature unfolded to them, if they were taught to see the fascinating landscape through the fog and so find a charming Corot for themselves. They may learn to see the cold purples on the hillside and the deep greens of the great trees with trunks of rich reddish brown like dregs of wine, while in the valley are shades of the most beautiful lilac hues.

All this teaching comes as much within the scope of playground workers as that of others, for their opportunities are many for helping children to realize in a free way that life is happier, more worth living, when beauty is discerned everywhere, although they themselves must often make some effort if they are to attain this beauty and enjoy it in great abundance.

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